



## Are cute dogs more playful?

Forkman, Björn

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**PROCEEDINGS**

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## ARE CUTE DOGS MORE PLAYFUL?

**Authors:** B Forkman, University of Copenhagen

**Presenter:** Dr. Björn A. Forkman

**Introduction:** In 1997 Goodwin et al published an influential article on "behavioural paedomorphism" i.e. that there is a difference in the behaviour between breeds and that this difference is related to the physical similarity of the breed to the wolf. The aim of the current study is to investigate this hypothesis using a different motivation; playfulness. A high level of playfulness is considered to be characteristic of a young animal.

**Methods:** The method used is to compare the results from the Swedish Dog Mentality Assessment (DMA) for the 10 breeds included in Goodwin et al's study. The DMA is a battery of 10 different tests with the behaviour being measured on an intensity scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). In the present study three of the measures are used: Interest in play, Grabbing a rag when it has been thrown, and Tug of war. The breeds included were Cavalier King Charles, Norfolk Terrier, French Bulldog, Cocker Spaniel (least wolf-like, N=267), Shetland Sheepdog, Large Munsterlander, Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever (slightly wolf-like, N=4'392), and German Shepherd and Siberian Husky (most wolf-like, N=13'392) - division made by Goodwin et al (1997).

**Results:** If the results of all breeds are included the least wolf-like breeds had an average of 3.1 (Interest), 2.6 (Grab) and 2.1 (Tug), with the slightly wolf-like breeds had 3.7, 3.2 and 3.0, and the most wolf-like breeds had 3.4, 3.1 and 2.8, i.e. almost the reverse of what was predicted. If only breeds with more than 20 individuals are included (i.e. Large Munsterlander and Siberian Husky excluded) it is even more evident that the prediction is not supported by the data: 3.1 (Interest), 2.6 (Grab) and 2.1 (Tug), vs 3.6, 3.1 and 2.7 (slightly wolf-like) and 3.9, 3.6 and 3.7 (most wolf-like).

**Conclusions:** The hypotheses that less wolf-like dog breeds show more puppy-like behaviour is not supported in the current study. There are several possible reasons for the negative result (apart from the hypothesis being wrong), including the influence of the specific test situation or the type of play investigated.